

called, from taking more than one such employment for the same year. A good place in a chantry was considered preferable to heavy parish work.¹

Besides those regularly engaged, clergy in minor orders could always be found about the great towns, waiting for employment of any sort. Without wife or child to work for, without rule or superior to obey, they contracted all the vices of the loafer. The shaven crown of the cleric protected their misdeeds from the severe laws of their country. * The abuses of monastic life, great as they may occasionally have been/ says Bishop Stubbs, speaking of this state of things, * sink into insignificance by the side of this evil, as an occasional crime tells against the moral condition of a nation less fatally than the prevalence of a low morality. The records of the spiritual court of the Middle Ages remain in such quantity and in such concord of testimony as to leave no doubt of the facts.²

Langland, himself a churchman of this class, but one who made a noble use of his life of leisure, is accused of laziness by the spiritual personages of his Vision, and in reply gives the following description and defence of the unemployed life and undeserved privileges of the lower clergy. The apology is perhaps ironical, for it is to be observed that * 'Conscience' remains unconvinced at the end:—

* I live in London, and on London both,
The tools I labour with and earn my livelihood
Are Pater Noster and my primer, Placebo and Dirige
And my psalter sometimes and my seven psalms.
Thus I sing for the souls of such as me help
And they that find me food promise, I trow,
That I shall be welcome when I come now and then
in a month,
Sometimes with him, sometimes with her, and thus I
beg
Without bag or bottle except my belly.
And also moreover, methinketh, sir Beason
Men should constrain no clerk to do serving-men's
work 5
For by law of Leviticus that our Lord ordained,
Clerks that are tonsured, of natural wisdom,
Should neither toil nor sweat nor serve on inquests
Nor fight in any vanguard nor grieve their foe,

¹ 36 Ed. III., cap. 8, *Stats. of Realm*; Wilkins, iii. 30 ;
Ctts., 206. * Stubbs, iii. 885, wid 378-9 ; *Vox*
Clam., bk. iii. cap. 22.